

# Health Facts



## Know Your Fats

Fats and oils are part of a healthy diet, and play many important roles in the body. Fat provides energy and is a carrier of essential nutrients such as vitamins A, D, E, K, and carotenoids. But many older adults have been told to decrease the amount of fat in their diets and are confused about what to do. Fat can impact the health of your heart and arteries in a positive or negative way, depending on how much you eat and the types of fat you eat.

### HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

#### Eat less saturated fat, *trans* fats, and cholesterol.

Eating too much saturated fat, the type of fat that is solid at room temperature, may increase risk of heart disease. Similarly, eating too much *trans* fat, which is made when liquid vegetable oil is processed to become solid or hydrogenated, also may increase risk of heart disease. And, eating too much cholesterol, a fatty substance found only in animal-based products, may clog arteries.

Total Calorie Intake	Limit on Saturated Fat Intake <sup>a</sup>
1,600	18 g or less
2,000	20 g or less
2,200	24 g or less
2,500	25 g or less

<sup>a</sup> Aim to consume less than 10% of total calories from saturated fat.

It is important to eat less than 10% of your calories from saturated fat. Also, you should keep *trans* fats as low as possible, and eat less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol each day.

If you aim to eat 2,000 calories a day, your daily allowance of saturated fat would be less than 200 calories or 20 grams—which equals 100% DV for

### What foods have healthy fats?

The table below lists common food sources of healthy fats.

Monounsaturated	Polyunsaturated Omega-6	Polyunsaturated Omega-3	
Nuts	Vegetable oils:	Certain fish:	Vegetable oils:
Vegetable oils:	Soybean	Salmon	Soybean
Canola	Corn	Trout	Canola
Olive	Safflower	Herring	Walnuts
High oleic safflower			Flaxseed
Sunflower			

saturated fat. The first table on page 1 shows the saturated fat limits for people with various calorie needs. If you have an elevated cholesterol level, you should follow your healthcare provider's advice. People with elevated cholesterol may be advised to decrease their calories from saturated fat to less than 7% of total calories and to consume less than 200 milligrams per day of cholesterol.

### Be wise about fat.

Choose fats found in fish, nuts, and vegetable oils. Experts recommend getting between 20% and 35% of calories from *total* fat, with most fats coming from fish, nuts, and vegetable oils. These foods can contain monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats and should be used instead of the saturated and *trans* fat sources in your diet. To help reduce the risk of heart disease, evidence suggests eating two servings of fish a week (about 8 ounces total).

Unhealthy fats such as saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol are found in many foods. So, look for choices that are lean, low-fat, or fat-free when selecting and preparing meat, poultry, and milk products. Trim excess fat from meat and poultry and remove the skin from poultry to reduce saturated fat. Limit foods that are processed or made with tropical oils (e.g., palm oil, palm fruit oil, palm kernel oil, coconut oil, etc.) that increase the amount of saturated fat in the food (e.g., cakes, cookies, pies, crackers, candy, creamers, etc.).

*Trans* fat is mostly found in food products made with shortening—liquid oil that is processed to become hard. Most of the *trans* fat Americans eat comes from cakes, cookies, crackers, pies, fried potatoes, household shortening, and stick margarine. Limiting consumption of many processed foods is an easy way to reduce *trans* fats.

### Use the label—what to look for and how it adds up.

The Nutrition Facts label can help you choose fats wisely. Look at the serving size and determine how many servings you are actually eating. If you eat two servings, you will be consuming double the calories and nutrients, such as fat. You will also get double the percent Daily Value (% DV) of other nutrients as well. The % DV represents one serving of the food item.

Amounts per serving % DV*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
<i>Trans</i> Fat 3g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 30mg	10%

\* Percent Daily Values on the Nutrition Facts Label are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Use the % DV on the Nutrition Facts label to identify which nutrients (total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol) are high or low: 5% DV or less is low, and 20% DV or more is high. There is no % DV for *trans* fat, but you should aim to keep *trans* fat intake as low as possible.

Additionally, the labels on some food packages have claims that describe a specific level of fat (including total fat, saturated, or *trans* fat) in a food. Some examples of claims to look for are: “fat-free,” “low saturated fat,” or “light.”

### There are many ways to reduce the saturated fat in your diet.

The Saturated Fat and Calories Content table on the next page shows a few examples of the saturated fat content of different forms of foods you may eat. Comparisons are made between foods in the same food group (e.g., regular cheddar cheese and low-fat cheddar cheese)—you can choose a lower saturated fat version and eat many of the foods you enjoy.

## The Saturated Fat and Calories Content of Different Forms of Selected Foods

Food Category	Amount	Saturated Fat Content (grams)	% Daily Value*	Calories
Cheese				
• Regular cheddar cheese	1 oz	6.0	30%	114
• Low-fat cheddar cheese	1 oz	1.2	6%	49
• Low-fat cottage cheese (1% milk fat)	1/2 oz	0.7	3%	81
Ground beef				
• Regular ground beef (25% fat)	3 oz (cooked)	6.1	31%	236
• Extra lean ground beef (5% fat)	3 oz (cooked)	2.6	13%	148
• Ground turkey	3 oz (cooked)	3.0	14%	193
Milk				
• Whole milk (3.24% fat)	1 c	4.6	23%	146
• Low-fat (1% fat) milk	1 c	1.5	8%	102
• Fat-free milk	1 c	0.0	0%	86
Breads				
• Croissant (med)	1 medium	6.6	33%	231
• Bagel, oat bran (4")	1 medium	0.2	1%	227
• Buttermilk biscuit (small)	1 small	1.2	6%	100
Frozen desserts				
• Regular ice cream	1/2 c	4.9	25%	145
• Frozen yogurt, low-fat	1/2 c	2.0	10%	110
• Sherbert	1/2 c	0.9	4%	107
Table spreads				
• Butter	1 tsp	2.4	12%	34
• Soft margarine with zero <i>trans</i> fat	1 tsp	0.7	4%	25
• Margarine-like spread (40% fat)	1 tsp	0.3	2%	16
Chicken				
• Fried chicken (leg, with skin)	3 oz (cooked)	3.3	17%	212
• Roasted chicken (breast, no skin)	3 oz (cooked)	0.9	5%	140
• Chicken nuggets	6 pieces	3.9	19%	285
Fish				
• Fried fish	3 oz	2.8	14%	195
• Baked fish	3 oz	1.5	8%	129
• Fish sticks	3 oz	2.7	14%	232

\* % Daily Values (DV) listed in this column are based on the food amounts listed in the table. The % DV listed is based on a 2,000 calorie diet. The DV for saturated fat is 20 grams.

Source: Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 17.

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